

# Phoenix mom who left baby atop car gets 3 months of jail

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A judge sentenced a Phoenix woman to three months of deferred jail time and 16 years of supervised probation after she left her son in a car seat atop the roof of her car and drove away.

Catalina Clouser was arrested in 2012 and charged with child abuse and driving under the influence of marijuana. Clouser was high when she put her then 2-month-old son, who was in a car seat, on the roof of her car and drove away, state prosecutor Tiffany Brady said. The car had gone about a quarter of a mile before the child fell, Brady said. The child was not injured. Earlier the same day, the father of the baby was arrested in connection with smoking marijuana while Clouser and the child were with him.

State prosecutors asked Judge Cynthia Bailey for jail time in addition to probation during the 30-minute sentencing hearing in a downtown Phoenix courtroom on Wednesday morning. Brady submitted e-mails from Clouser's mother to the court where she recommends intensive probation for Clouser because she had slipped a couple of times and used drugs. The state also expressed concern that Clouser was pregnant again, Brady said.

"She's just not taking this seriously," she said.

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Bailey, however, said there was no objective proof that Clouser had used drugs during the two years between her arrest and sentencing. Bailey said she had passed all drug tests and was under electronic monitoring.

The state also said the two people who had found the child were traumatized. Defense attorney Jennifer Willmott said the 19-year-old's actions were "absolutely and completely reckless" but said her client was the one who was traumatized.

Willmott said Clouser has done everything she could to right her wrong, including counseling and parenting classes. The defense attorney said Clouser has also developed a relationship with her son during their visits, raising.

"I guess what I'm not understanding is why the state would want to break the (parental) bond at this point," Willmott said.

After both the state and defense talked, Clouser spoke to the judge in a soft voice and said she was "blessed" her son was OK.

"I just want to say I know what I did was horrible," Clouser said.

Bailey deferred Clouser's three months of jail time to begin on Nov 9. The judge said the event was terrible and the child was lucky to not be injured.

"It's really close to a miracle after falling off the top of a car," Bailey said.